

## United States Senate

May 13, 2020

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: Gila County/Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Transportation grants program**

Dear Secretary Chao,

I am writing in support of the application submitted by Gila County for \$21,095,564 in funds under the FY 2020 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) discretionary grants program. The proposal would fund the Tonto Creek Bridge project.

This proposal, which includes a local investment from the County of \$3,383,450, aims to reduce the threats associated with frequent flooding in the Tonto Creek. The project would provide a safe passage point for east-west access across the Tonto Basin, which covers 31 square miles. Currently, residents on the east side of the Tonto Creek must travel a 75 mile detour during floods to safely cross the basin. This jeopardizes access to critical services including school, healthcare, and work. Additionally, the bridge would improve access to public lands in Gila County, particularly the Tonto National Forest.

Last November, I shared in the unimaginable grief of the Rawlings family who lost three young children in an accident crossing the Tonto Creek. Since 1995, 8 people have died as a result of the Tonto Creek flooding, which occurs annually. When major flooding occurs, road closures average 25 days. This condition continues to pose serious safety issues and limits economic investment and development.

I appreciate your review of this grant proposal for Gila County. I ask that you give this request full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,



Martha McSally  
United States Senator